

Earth Action Heroes protect the planet. Whether it's saving energy or guarding Bloomington's precious natural resources, these individuals are making a difference. Here are your neighbors in action ...



EARTH ACTION HEROES THE TORO TROOPERS

WHAT DO YOU GET WHEN YOU COMBINE TORO'S LANDSCAPE maintenance equipment and volunteers willing to use it? The answer, after the dust settles, is a community beautification project.

To celebrate Intergeneration Week in September, 45 Toro Company volunteers and 260 Olson Middle School students pulled on their gloves, donned their red t-shirts and gathered up their tools to give something back to the community. The group weeded, raked and mulched the grounds at the Masonic Home and Creekside Community Center, and collected seeds for the wildflower restoration program at Richardson Nature Center.

Through their Giving Program, Bloomington-based Toro Company donates products, money and volunteer time to organizations that preserve the outdoor environment and to other programs that support the community. Toro also allows its employees to take paid time off to volunteer for nonprofit organizations and community service projects.

Olson Middle School and Toro are community improvement partners. Through the School District's Prepare Bloomington partnership program, they meet together to plan activities that will meet their common goals. The community beautification event was their third service project together. Toro's Volunteer Coordinator Kathy Manson said the partnership is great for Toro and for the kids. She said the senior project is especially gratifying.

"The project allows kids to interact with the older generation," Manson said. "The seniors appreciate having children around for the social aspect and they get to see the good in youth today."

Overall, the community service project provided the youth with a chance to practice environmental stewardship and gave them a sense of accomplishment.

"It felt good doing the work because we were helping the community," said Brian, an Olson sixth grader. "Citizens of Bloomington would be surprised to see that we could do such a good job."

A partnership that supports the environment and that is rewarding for all participants makes it a clean sweep not only for the Toro Troopers but also for Bloomington.

Do you know an Earth Action Hero? Do they conserve and protect our natural resources in unique or interesting ways? If so, we would like to hear from you. Call Jean Buckley at 952-563-8751.



MAKE THE DIFFERENCE STEPS YOU CAN TAKE TO ENSURE A BRIGHT TOMORROW

WETLAND VEGETATION TREATMENT POLICY OFFERS INCENTIVE FOR PROPERTY OWNERS

BLOOMINGTON'S LAKES AND PONDS ARE A SOURCE OF pride and beauty for the entire community. The City Council adopted a new policy for chemical treatments of algae and aquatic vegetation in ponds that reflects recommendations from the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). The policy establishes incentives for property owners who implement landscape and yard care practices that minimize pollution of nearby wetlands.

Residents who own property abutting a pond are encouraged to help limit the growth of aquatic vegetation by establishing and maintaining an unmowed vegetative buffer zone around the edge of the wetland and keeping grass clippings and leaves away from the water body, street or storm drain. If more than half of the property owners adjacent to a wetland commit to on-site mitigation, the City will share the costs of aquatic vegetation treatment. When all of the property owners commit to on-site mitigation, the City will pay the total cost of treatment.

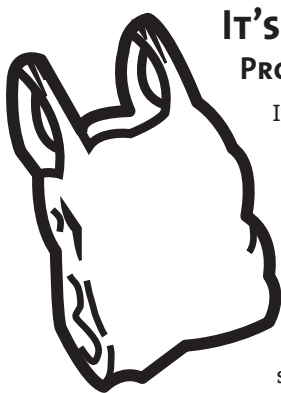
The City intends to protect recreational use of Bloomington's lakes and ponds without seriously interfering with the natural environment. Therefore, the City adopts the DNR's recommendations to limit chemical treatments of wetlands to the smallest amount that will be effective. Typically, that is one or two chemical applications per summer.

For more information, call Environmental Health at 952-563-8952. To view the entire policy, visit www.ci.bloomington.mn.us, keywords: Wetland policy.



LAKESCAPING SEMINAR

Learn how you can help improve water quality and build a beautiful buffer zone on your property. An educational meeting will be held on Saturday, March 5, at 1 p.m., at the Penn Lake Library, 8800 Penn Avenue South. Representatives from the Department of Natural Resources and the City of Bloomington will be on hand to provide information and answer questions. For more information, call Jean Buckley at 952-563-8751.



IT'S IN THE BAG PROGRAM UPDATE

IN OCTOBER 2003, GROCERY STORES AND THE SOUTH HENNEPIN RECYCLING and Problem Waste Drop-off Center began accepting plastic bags for recycling. Since then, work crews have collected, sorted and baled more than 330,000 pounds of plastic bags and film – the equivalent of 14 million plastic bags that would have ended up in a landfill or incinerator. The "It's in the Bag" program has also created 34 jobs and approximately 11,250 work hours with more than 6,000 pickups at 90 stores in the metropolitan area.

Clean, dry plastic shopping bags are accepted for recycling at Cub, Lund's, Byerly's and Kowalski's grocery stores, and Hennepin County's drop-off facilities. For more information visit www.itsinthebagmn.org.

SNOW AND ICE REMOVAL TIPS LIMIT SALT AND OTHER CHEMICAL USE THIS WINTER

SPRINKLING SALT AND OTHER CHEMICAL DEICERS ON SLIPPERY sidewalks may help melt snow and ice, but these products can be harmful to nearby water bodies, soil, plants and even concrete surfaces. To minimize your use of salt and other chemical deicers this winter:

- Keep shoveling. Only use deicers to remove the last layer of ice.
- Mix salt with some sand or cat litter to add traction to slippery surfaces.
- Use smaller quantities. Salt is most effective if applied in a thin, even layer.

Source: University of Minnesota Extension Service.



SPRING 2005 CURBSIDE CLEANUP

COLLECTION DATES

Location	Regular trash day is:	2005 Curbside pickup is Saturday:
West of Normandale	Friday	April 16
France to Normandale	Thursday	April 23
Penn to France	Wednesday	April 30
Portland to Penn	Tuesday	May 7
East of Portland	Monday	May 21